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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 259637

FOL TEL RPT ALGIERS 3210 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO MADRID NOUAKCHOTT
PARIS RABAT USCINCEUR OCT 30 QTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 3210

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SS, MO, MR, AG

SUBJ: SPANISH SAHARA

1. I WAS SUMMONED TO FOREIGN MINISTRY THIS MORNING TO MEET WITH SECRETARY GENERAL BENHABYLES, WHO SAID HE UNDER INSTRUCTIONS FROM PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE, TO CONVEY TO ME ALGERIAN POSITION ON PROBLEM OF SPANISH SAHARA. HE SAID THAT FOR ALGERIANS IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT NORMAL DECOLONIZATION PROCESS, AS ENVISAGED UNDER UN CHARTER, BE OBSERVED. THIS MEANT THAT THERE MUST BE SELF-DETERMINATION. WHAT THE SAHRAOUI VOTED FOR WAS LESS IMPORTANT THAN THAT THE PRINCIPLE THAT THEY BE GIVEN A CHOICE BE MAINTAINED. NOT TO DO SO WAS TO OPEN A PANDORA'S BOX OF HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS CLAIMS WHICH WOULD SET A VERY UNDESIRABLE PRECEDENT FOR OTHER AREAS IN THE WORLD. MEMBERS OF UN HAD DELIBERATELY DECIDED TO MAINTAIN COLONIAL BORDERS AND TO IGNORE HISTORICAL CLAIMS PRECISELY IN ORDER AVOID SUCH PRECEDENTS AND TO MAINTAIN STABPLITY IN FORMER COLONIAL AREAS. THIS PRINCIPLE WAS NOW BEING FLOUTED BY MOROCCO.
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THIS CONSTITUTED GRAVE THREAT TO STAIBILITY OF REGION.

2. BENHABYLES NOTED THAT THERE WERE VARIOUS ARGUMENTS WHICH HAD BEEN ADVANCED TO EFFECT SELF-DETERMINATION WAS NOT PRACTICAL, OR NOT CALLED FOR, IN THIS PARTICULAR INSTANCE. OF THESE THERE WAS ONE OBJECTIVE ARGUMENT WHICH THE ALGERIANS RECOGNIZED AS HAVING SOME VALIDITY; FACT THAT POPULATION OF AREA WAS SO SMALL. THIS DID NOT HAVE RELEVANCE TO THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION, BECAUSE THERE WERE OTHER COLONIES WHICH HAD BECOME INDEPENDENT NATIONS WITH FEWER OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF NATIONHOOD THAN THE SPANISH SAHARA HAD. IT WAS PERHAPS ARGUABLE, HOWEVER, THAT BECAUSE OF SIZE OF POPULATION SOME ARRANGEMENT SHOULD BE WORKED OUT BETWEEN AN INDEPENDENT SAHARA AND ITS NEIGHBORS. THIS WOULD HAVE TO BE THE SECOND PHASE, HOWEVER, AFTER SAHRAOUI HAD BEEN GIVEN A CHANCE TO VOTE ON THEIR FUTURE. (THIS IS SECOND TIME BENHABYLES HAS MENTIONED TO ME POSSIBILITY OF SOME SORT OF QUOTE ARRANGEMENT UNQUOTE. TERM HE USED DURING AHERTON VISIT WAS QUOTE CONFEDERATION UNQUOTE, BUT ON NEITHER OCCASION DID HE SPELL OUT WHAT HE MEANT.) ALGERIA HAD NO TERRITORIAL CLAIMS AND IT WAS PREPARED TO ACCEPT WHATEVER THIS PEOPLE OF SAHARA ACCEPTED, BUT IT FELT IT ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY THAT THOSE PEOPLE BE GIVEN A CHANCE TO SAY WHAT THEY WANTED. OBSERVANCE OF THIS PRINCIPLE WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN OUTCOME OF VOTE.

3. BENHABYLES SAID HASSAN HAD OPENED THE FLOOD OF FANATICISM AND HAD RALLIED THE PEASANTS AND PETITE BOURGEOISE WITH HIS EMOTIONAL APPEALS TO THE KORAN AND HIS POSITION AS COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL. THE MOBILIZATION OF THIS MANY PEOPLE WAS A VERY DANGEROUS AFFAIR. NOBODY COULD IGNORE A CROWD OF 350,000. THE CROWD DID NOT ONLY INCLUDE THOSE RESPONDING TO THE KING'S CALL OUT OF IGNORANCE AND NAIVETE, BUT ALSO MEMBERS OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES WHO WERE PUSHING THE GREEN MARCH TO SERVE THEIR OWN ENDS. THEIR TARGET WAS THE MONARCHY. MARCH WAS AS GREAT A DANGER TO THE MOROCCAN MONARCHY AS IT WAS TO ANYONE.

4. ALL THIS WAS PITY BECAUSE IF HASSAN HAD PLAYED CARDS RIGHT HE COULD HAVE BEEN SURE OF FAVORABLE VOTE IN CONFIDENTIAL

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REFERENDUM. HE HAD PLAYED THEM POORLY, HOWEVER, AND PROPOSED MARCH WOULD BE AGAINST WILL OF PEOPLE OF SAHARA, WHO WERE ALREADY DEMONSTRATING THEIR CONCERN AND DISMAY. SOME PEOPLE ARGUED THAT BECAUSE THEY WERE SO FEW IT WOULD BE EASY TO IGNORE THEM. IN POINT OF FACT SMALLNESS OF THEIR NUMBERS WOULD MAKE THEM ALL THE MORE DESPERATE AND PASSIONATE IN THEIR RESISTANCE.

5. MOROCCO HAD ALSO UNDERTAKEN ORGANIZATION CAMPAIGN OF ABUSE AGAINST ALGERIA. AS I WOULD HAVE NOTED, ALGERIANS HAD REMAINED VERY CALM AND HAD REFRAINED FROM ANY ATTEMPT TO INCITE THE MASSES AGAINST THE MOROCCANS. THEY HAD NOT RESPONDED IN KIND TO THE LATTER. THEY HAD WANTED KEEP MATTER ON LEVEL CHIEFS OF STATE. HE COULD ASSURE ME HOWEVER THAT CONTINUED MOROCCAN ATTACKS WERE DISTURBING PEOPLE GREATLY. (HE IMPLIED THAT ALGERIAN RESTRAINT WOULD NOT LAST FOREVER.)

6. BENHABYLES SAID GOA UNDERSTOOD AMERICAN POSITION OF NEUTRALITY IN ISSUE INVOLVING FRIENDS. NEUTRALITY HOWEVER SHOULD NOT MEAN INDIFFERENCE. THERE HAD BEEN INTERNATIONAL UNANIMITY OF SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE SAHARA AND THIS PRINCIPLE SHOULD BE OBSERVED. ALGERIANS HOPED FOR OUR SUPPORT FOR THIS PRINCIPLE, PARTICULARLY IN SECURITY COUNCIL.

7. I SAID I WOULD REPORT THIS DEMARCHE IMMEDIATELY, BUT FRANKLY DID NOT SEE WHAT WE COULD DO AT THIS MOMENT. IT WAS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER HASSAN WAS ABLE TO STOP. I ASKED WHETHER SECRETARY GENERAL WALDHEIM HAD MADE ANY PROPOSITIONS WHILE HERE. BENHABYLES HAD SAID HE HAD TENTATIVELY RAISED POSSIBILITY OF A LIMITED UN TRUSTEESHIP WHICH WOULD TAKE OVER SAHARA FROM THE ADMINISTRATING POWER AND THEN ARRANGE ITS METAMORPHOSIS INTO A DIFFERENT STATUS. HE SAID HE DID NOT KNOW HOW THE OTHER GOVERNMENTS FELT ABOUT, BUT WAS SURE MOROCCO WOULD ATTEMPT TO BLOCK ANY SUCH EFFORT BECAUSE IT WOULD MEAN SELF-DETERMINATION.

8. I NOTED THAT MINISTER OF INTERIOR WAS IN MADRID AND ASKED IF HE WAS GOING TO BE IN TOUCH WITH THE MAURITANIAN OR MOROCCAN FOREIGN MINISTERS WHO WERE NOW THERE. BENHABYLES

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SAID HE DID NOT KNOW, BUT HE RATHER DOUBTED IT. MINISTER OF INTERIOR HAD GONE THERE TO TALK TO SPANISH. LATTER HAD BEEN VERY CORRECT IN THEIR BEHAVIOR AND HAD INSISTED ON KEEPING ISSUE IN MULTILATERAL CONTEXT RATHER THAN SOLVING IT BILATERALLY AS MOROCCANS WANTED. (HE IMPLIED THAT MINISTER OF INTERIOR WAS THERE AT SPANISH REQUEST IN ORDER TO BALANCE MAURITANIANS AND MOROCCANS).

9. COMMENT: MEETING WAS CARRIED ON IN FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE AND BENHABYLES AT NO TIME GAVE ANY INDICATION OF ALGERIAN DISPLEASURE WITH US. NUMBER OTHER AMBASSADORS INCLUDING BRITISH AND SOVIET HAVE ALSO BEEN SUMMONED FOR SAME PURPOSE. PRESUME ALL MEMBERS SECURITY COUNCIL WILL RECEIVE SAME DEMARCHE. GIVEN WALDHEIM'S REPORTED CONCERN ABOUT STRENGTH OF ALGERIAN REACTION I HAD EXPECTED SOMEWHAT

MORE VIGOROUS PRESENTATION, WITH VEILED THREATS OF ACTION.
THERE WAS NONE OF THAT HOWEVER.

10. THERE IS NO QUESTION BUT THAT ALGERIANS ARE SERIOUSLY
UPSET BY MOROCCAN POLICIES AND ALARMED AT POSSIBILITY
THERE MAY BE SPANISH-MORROCAN DEAL. I AM CONVINCED THAT
THEY WILL REACT PRUDENTLY WITH EYE TO THEIR LONG TERM
INTERESTS BUT THERE IS NO QUESTION IN THEIR MINDS THAT
THOSE INTERESTS MILITATE AGAINST MOROCCAN PRESENCE IN
SAHARA. IT WOULD BE MISTAKE TO INTERPRET THEIR LACK OF
OVERT ACTION TO DATE AS MEANING THEY ARE NOT SERIOQS
OR THAT THEY WILL NOT HOLD IT AGAINST THOSE COUNTRIES
WHICH SUPPORT MOROCCO IN THIS CONTEST. MAINTAINING
OUR NEUTRALITY IS GOING TO BE DIFFICULT, BUT IT IS
VERY IMPORTANT TO THE FUTURE OF OUR RELATIONS WITH THIS
COUNTRY THAT WE DO SO.

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